FBI Disputes Ex-Agent's Claim That Backs Ray On King Slaying

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MEMPHIS, March 25—A former FBI agent's claim that he found evidence supporting James Earl Ray's assertion of a frame-up in the assassination of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. is a "total fabrication," an FBI spokesman said today.

Former agent Donald Wilson said he discovered the evidence—two slips of paper—in Ray's car six days after King was killed by a sniper in Memphis on April 4, 1968, but did not tell anyone.

FBI records, however, show Wilson was not among the five agents who searched the car.

"He is alleging something that as far as we're concerned is a total fabrication," FBI spokesman Frank Scafidi said from bureau headquarters in Washington.

A former agent who did search the car supported Scafidi's statement, as did the lead state prosecutor in the Ray case.

Wilson made his claim Tuesday at a news conference in Atlanta with Ray's attorney William Pepper. Pepper said Wilson took two slips of paper from Ray's car. Both had the name "Raul" written on them, and one detailed "a laundry list of payments to other people and other entities," Pepper said.

Neither Pepper nor Wilson said why he waited 30 years to come forward, and Pepper today dismissed Scafidi's comments as part of an FBI "disinformation campaign."

Ray has argued for 30 years that he was set up to take the blame for the murder by an underworld figure he knew only as Raul. No evidence of Raul's existence has ever been found by prosecutors.

King's widow, Coretta Scott King, said Tuesday she wants an investigation into Wilson's claim. "This is compelling evidence that further strengthens Mr. Ray's appeal for the trial he never had," she said.

Ray, now 70, confessed to the crime and pleaded guilty in 1969 but recanted three days later and has sought a trial since then. He is serving a 99-year sentence and has been in poor health because of liver disease.